April 24, 2017

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

To:         Mayor and Members of Council

From:       Harry Black, City Manager HB

Subject:    Engage Cincy Update

---

As initiated by various citizens and directed by City Council, the Administration continues efforts to enhance community engagement with various stakeholders and residents as what has become known as "Engage Cincy." Progress has been made on several fronts and has been achieved with no additional staff and within the current budget constraints.

Priorities have been identified by interested citizens, the Mayor and City Council and the City Administration. What follows is an update on these efforts.

### I.      Community Council Communications & Tracking

For years, policy makers, community members and City employees have had difficulty maintaining reliable communications with the 48 recognized community councils. This primarily has to do with the lack of a maintained database able to track the ever-changing leadership and schedules of the community councils and their various committees. This creates inefficiency and hinders the ability of the City to effectively engage with community councils, as well as the ability of community councils to interact and share ideas with one another.

Sparked by the Engage Cincy effort, the Administration has developed a new visual tool to track the City's 48 recognized community councils (see attached picture). This new Community Council Tracker allows residents, stakeholders and City employees to quickly identify the community council of record, and locate contact and meeting information. It may be accessed as part of CincyInsights here: https://insights.cincinnati-oh.gov/stories/s/Community-Councils/csw6-ps2a

This tool is only as valuable as the data used to populate. To take this to the next level, and to provide enhanced engagement opportunity among the city's community councils, the City has partnered with Invest in Neighborhoods (Invest) to create a new digital portal that will connect community council leadership with one another, the City and Invest. The portal will be housed at Invest and accessible to all neighborhoods. Invest already tracks community council contact information, interacts with them on a number of fronts and is in the process of revamping its own website. The new portal will include:

- separate, private log-in privileges for each community council user and for the City;
- a dashboard style interface with information grouped by category;
- profiles for each community council, configurable by Council;

- users will be able to choose to participate in customized groups;
- tracking of interface usage grouped by users;
- notifications for users based upon interface activity;
- community forums and discussions;
- links to pertinent City websites; and
- private messaging for users.

This portal will not be created in a vacuum. Invest will host community input sessions throughout the development process and will provide ongoing training and technical assistance to users once the site is developed. Once the basic portal is in place, additional opportunities for engagement using the platform are promising.

### II.     Expanded Community Engagement Action Team (CEAT)

City staff, stakeholders and community representatives meet monthly to review progress and priorities. The meetings are convened monthly by the Communications Office and membership of the group has been expanded and now includes representation from the community, Budget Office, the Office of Performance & Data Analytics, Enterprise Technology Solutions, Invest in Neighborhoods, City Council aides, Human Resources and the Human Relations Office.

Anyone interested in learning more and participating in Engage Cincy should visit: http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/manager/engage-cincy-community/sign-up-to-get-involved/

### III.     Community Engagement Action Plan

In September 2016, the first Community Engagement action plan was completed. This was developed by the Community Engagement Action Team (CEAT) and includes a listing of action items in priority order. The plan is dynamic and adjusted as necessary. The action plan takes into account the priorities identified by the City Council, community, City Administration as well as resource/staffing constraints. Many of the action items are mentioned in this report. For your reference, a complete listing is attached.

### IV.     Engage Cincy Grant 2.0

In March at the Neighborhood Summit luncheon, the second annual Engage Cincy grant winners were announced. The Engage Cincy grant is a unique community building competition providing residents, organizations and local charities a chance to win funding for the development, launch and promotion of innovative ideas for bettering a specific place in the city, or all of Cincinnati. The Engage Cincy grants remains popular. This year's winners were chosen from over 100 submissions.

The 2017 winners are: Healthy Food for All Northsiders (CAIN); Just Hire Me (Lawrence Jones); Physi (Marty Boyer); Bridgeable (Dani Isaacsohn); and Faces of Homelessness (ArtWorks and Strategies to End Homelessness). The Administration is now working with each winner to turn the proposals into reality. More information about each and event photos may be found here: http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/manager/news/ideas-to-engage-cincy-earn-5-local-groups-10k-prizes/2017-engage-cincy-winners/

Additionally, one of last year's winners, the Cincinnati Neighborhoods Games, was by all accounts a tremendous success. We are working with them in order to ensure the necessary resources are available to continue the event, even bigger and better, in 2018.

## V.    Overhauled Budget Engagement

As reported in detail in January, the City continues to revamp the budget community engagement process in order to gather useful information, feedback and ideas as the Mayor, City Council and Administration prepare and adopt a FY18/19 budget. This has included:

- beginning the process much earlier than previous years (August 2016);
- hosting additional community meetings and utilizing new approaches including three budget basic interactive engagement sessions;
- working with the Budget & Finance Committee to host an input session specifically related to the creation of a budget priority motion;
- a new budget engagement website to seek feedback and keep people informed of opportunities to engage the process http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/finance/cincinnati-budget-engagement/ ;
- offering surveys to gather feedback about the budget process and City services in general;
- creating and sharing an educational video about the budget;
- offering 5 public education sessions and budget exercises at various recreation centers for citizens to learn about the budget and engage with the City;
- collecting, reviewing and responding to more than 80 formal Community Budget Requests; and
- launching the Neighborhood Project Suggestion forms which included 156 requests from citizens.

This new approach, led by the Budget Office and supported by the Planning Department and Communications Office, has been integrated into the larger Engage Cincy initiative. This has been extremely valuable for the City Administration and represents significant improvement over prior years. While progress has been made, additional opportunities for improvement have been identified for the FY18 budget process and beyond.

## VI.    Engage Cincy Administrative Regulation & Employee Training

In March 2016, the City Manager signed new Administrative Regulation #69 implementing the City Council community engagement directive and establishing guidelines for all City departments related to Community Engagement activities including required training. This was developed in part by the CEAT. Trainers have included the Human Resources department, the Office of Human Relations and community volunteers from the CEAT.

Since Administrative Regulation #69 went into effect, led by the City's Human Resources department in coordination with the CEAT, a community engagement training curriculum was developed and trainings have begun. In the months since, 18 sessions have been held and over 700 employees have been trained.

Based on lessons learned, revisions to Administrative Regulation #69 are underway. Community engagement trainings at worksites across the City continue.

### VII.    External Community Engagement Training Opportunities

Another community engagement action item is the creation of a public facing engagement training and curriculum open to anyone wishing to attend. Using the basic structure created in the employee community engagement training sessions, discussions are now underway to devise and implement an in person, external facing program.

### VIII.    CincyInsights

In 2016, the City's website was overhauled. One of the primary objectives was to enhance engagement consistent with the Engage Cincy initiative. Since then, additional enhancements have been made to the website to allow for residents, community members and any other interested stakeholder to engage with the City in new and interesting ways.

CincyInsights is available here: https://insights.cincinnati-oh.gov/ and maps massive amounts of City data allowing users to interact in real-time. Anyone interested is invited to explore road conditions, potholes filled, heroin overdoses, crime statistics and much more.

The data is updated in real-time and may be easily sorted by neighborhood, often by street and over varying time periods. This feature uses the latest technology to engage users in unique ways and makes basic information about the City government easily available to anyone interested.

The tool has proven quite popular, with over 52,000 hits since the December 2016 launch.

### Conclusion
Progress in advancing the community engagement priorities of the community, the Mayor, City Council and the Administration continues. These gains have been made within existing budgets and with staff who have other duties for which they are responsible.

Given the progress made within existing resources through the Engage Cincy initiative and considering the significant $25.1 million budget deficit faced as the FY18 budget is developed, at this time the Administration does not recommend funding a stand-alone office to coordinate community engagement activities, though such an office would be of value and should remain a long-term goal.

However, the Administration stands ready to implement the creation of a stand-alone Engage Cincy office should City Council identify this as a funding priority. In reviewing current needs and resources, the estimate for a basic full-time office of engagement is approximately $300,000 and would include the addition of 2 full-time employees.

I am grateful to all of those who have volunteered their time in pursuing this initiative, as well as the countless staff members who have advanced these priorities and attended the trainings.

The Administration will continue to work through the avenues identified herein to pursue the Engage Cincy priorities.

Attachments